

BRACHYMYRMEX MUSCULUS, A NEW ANT IN THE UNITED STATES¹

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While driving across southern Louisiana on 23 January 1976, we stopped briefly at a wayside park near Madisonville in Saint Tammany Parish. In addition to resting we collected samples from four ant nests. The first three proved to be *Iridomyrmex humilis*; the fourth was a *Brachymyrmex* but not *depilis*. The latest key to this genus is by Santschi in 1923. In this we identified our sample as *musculus*. Mr. R.R. Snelling kindly confirmed our identification.

A live oak trunk had been sawed off about 12 inches above the ground; our ants were in sawdust among the above-ground roots. A colony of *Iridomyrmex humilis* was also in the sawdust about two feet from the *Brachymyrmex*.

Forel described *B. musculus* in 1899 as a subspecies of *B. tristis* from Costa Rica. In 1901 he raised it to specific rank and listed a Mexican locality (Cuernavaca, Morelos). Dr. D.R. Smith has given us the two records in the United States National Museum: Mirador in Vera Cruz, Mexico and Watlings Isl. in the Bahamas. Mr. Snelling has given us the records (all Mexican) in the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History—*Vera Cruz*: Camarón; 8 mi NW Sontecomapan; Los Tuxtlas. *Oaxaca*: 12 mi SE Huajuapán de León 6100'; 13 mi NW Oaxaca 5500'. *Morelos*: Cuernavaca.

The discovery of *Brachymyrmex musculus* in Louisiana poses an interesting question: is the species native or introduced? We think the evidence for introduction is overwhelming. If it were native it should also occur in Texas, where it could hardly have escaped discovery by both W.M. Wheeler and W.S. Creighton. New Orleans is an ideal port-of-entry for tropical pests. The Argentine ant was probably introduced there. Madisonville would be separated from New Orleans by Lake Ponchartrain, which is about 25 miles wide, were it not for the causeway which gives almost direct vehicular connection across the lake.

These two species may be separated by the following key:

- 1a. Concolorous strong brown to reddish yellow; no erect hairs on thoracic dorsum; pubescence on gaster dense; workers 1½-2 mm long *depilis*
- 1b. Concolorous very dusky red; thoracic dorsum with 6-8 stout hairs about 0.1 mm long; pubescence on gaster not concealing shining surface; workers 1¼-1½ mm long *musculus*

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